

Gretchen the gabber

“I don’t just read books;
I talk about them too.”

Gretchen joined BookMooch a year ago to get rid of some books. She has listed over 150 books on BookMooch and about 70% of them have been mooched. Most of the books in her inventory are either about Sociology or genre novels, especially fantasy and science fiction. She wants to give her books away to people with similar interests, especially in Sociology.

She spends a lot of time talking about books in the LibraryThing forum (that’s where she learned about BookMooch). People talk about a lot of things in the LibraryThing forums, including BookMooch: saving money on postage, how to wrap books, features they’d like to see, technical problems they encounter, and so forth. And, of course, they talk about books too. These conversations stay on the LibraryThing forum. They have not migrated to the BookMooch forum or other sites. Gretchen would like to talk about BookMooch on BookMooch instead of on LibraryThing. But there would need to be better forum software before she would do that.

Gretchen links to her BookMooch account from her LibraryThing profile. She finds people that seem interesting, and then looks at their profiles to see what books they have available to mooch. She has made some friends through BookMooch, though the friendship only exists online and they have not met face-to-face.

Talking about books is important to Gretchen. In addition, to the LibraryThing forums, she belongs to a Yahoo! group listserv about the German sociologist Max Weber. She is also part of a book club. The book club has about 8-10 people and they meet every month. They read mostly literary bestsellers. She wishes they read more non-fiction or Sociology-related books. She likes most of the books, though she skips a month sometimes if she is really not interested in the title. She does not belong to an online book club.

One thing she likes about BookMooch is feeling part of a vibrant, friendly, respectful community. She is concerned that BookMooch isn’t doing enough to build community. To her, books are about more than reading. They’re about conversation, people, and friendships. They’re about community. She likes giving away books. But in the end, she likes BookMooch because she likes making connections with other people who like talking about what they read.

User Goals

- Connect with people who share similar reading interests
- Give books to people who need them
- Manage her book collection online

Reading Activity

- **Reads:** 5-7 books per month
- **Favorite author:** Orson Scott Card
- **Favorite genres:** Sociology, Fantasy, SciFi
- **Book clubs:** Local book club
- **Talks about books online:** LibraryThing forums and Yahoo! groups
- **Other activities:** Writes book reviews; maintains book catalog with LibraryThing

BookMooch Activity

- **BookMooch member for:** 13 months
- **Logs in:** at least 4 days a week
- **Participates in LibraryThing forums:** at least 5 times a week
- **Talks about books at:** Library Thing forums, Yahoo listserv
- **Receiving books:** Loves the feeling she gets from receiving packages in the mail from strangers



Personal Information

- **Nickname:** Gretchen the Gabber
- **Age:** 33
- **Profession:** Student pursuing Masters degree
- **Hobbies:** Cooking, tennis, writing book reviews
- **Personality:** Outgoing, friendly, detail-oriented, social butterfly
- **Location:** Heidelberg/ Germany
- **Marital status:** Single
- **Education:** BS in Sociology. Seeking a MS degree in Communication

Gretchen

supporting data from the survey and followup interviews

General Findings

- **Wide age range.** Typical is between 25-55 and reflects the age distribution of the overall BookMooch community.
- **# of children varies.** About half reported having no children, which is similar to the overall distribution for the general BookMooch community.
- **Well educated.** Over 70% report having a university degree of some sort, either a bachelor's or a graduate degree. This is similar to the overall distribution for the BookMooch community.
- **More likely to be female.** 94% of people matching this profile where female in our survey, compared with 81% for typical BookMooch users.
- **Logs in regularly.** 60% login to BookMooch every day, with another 33% logging in several times per week. This is higher than the average BookMoocher, of 37% of whom login daily and a further 41% login several times per week.
- **Relatively heavy reader.** 51% read 6 or more books per month, compared with 34% for typical BookMooch users. In addition, 88% read at least 3 books per month on average, compared with only 76% for typical BookMooch users.
- **Regularly acquires new books.** 56% acquired 6 or more books per month, compared with 37% for typical BookMooch users. In addition, 90% acquire at least 3 books per month on average, compared with only 72% for typical BookMooch users.

On talking about books on BookMooch

- "[BookMooch] should allow people to organize themselves into their own groups and yet still have an organized way of presenting its conversations."
- "I talk about BookMooch to everybody and do what I can to help the BookMooch community."
- "I wish there were a way to prolong the conversation in a lot of these online tools."
- "The BookMooch forum needs to be improved so that people feel more comfortable. It should allow people to organize themselves into their own groups."

On using LibraryThing

- "I found out about BookMooch through LibraryThing. I participate in the BookMooch forums in LibraryThing, but none of those conversations have moved off the forum."
- "I like the sense of community on LibraryThing; all the people there love books too. The forums are easy to use, very basic, and they work well."
- "On LibraryThing, the forums just work. They are easy to use, and the threads are not nested."
- "I like contacting people I trade and/or mooch books with. I continue email conversations after receiving the first email that someone has mooched a book."
- "I like seeing the lists that people make, if I agree with their taste; it is a good way to learn about new books."
- "My conversations with other BM members mainly revolve around lists – Top 5 lists, books I'll never give away, etc."

On local/offline book clubs

- "I love to talk about books. It is interesting to compare my impressions with other peoples'. I encounter a lot of new ideas and perspectives that I would never have thought of on my own."
- "The people in my book club come from all walks of life, and so there are a wide variety of opinions and book choices."
- "Although I'm glad to attend book club meetings, I dread driving there. So, I would definitely participate in opportunities to discuss books online – a la online book clubs."
- "I like that it's a special set of people with differing tastes – I've been exposed to books I'd otherwise not read. We share good food and wine while discussing books."
- "I like the book club because it is a fun time to get together with the girls for wine. I enjoy talking about characters with members to find out why they like or dislike a particular one. We sit and chat and use book talk to bounce off onto other topics."
- "I consider these people to be regular friends, and we talk about all kinds of things, not just books. We talk online every day."